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A SILVER CORD LOOSED

C
Johnson,
M.S.

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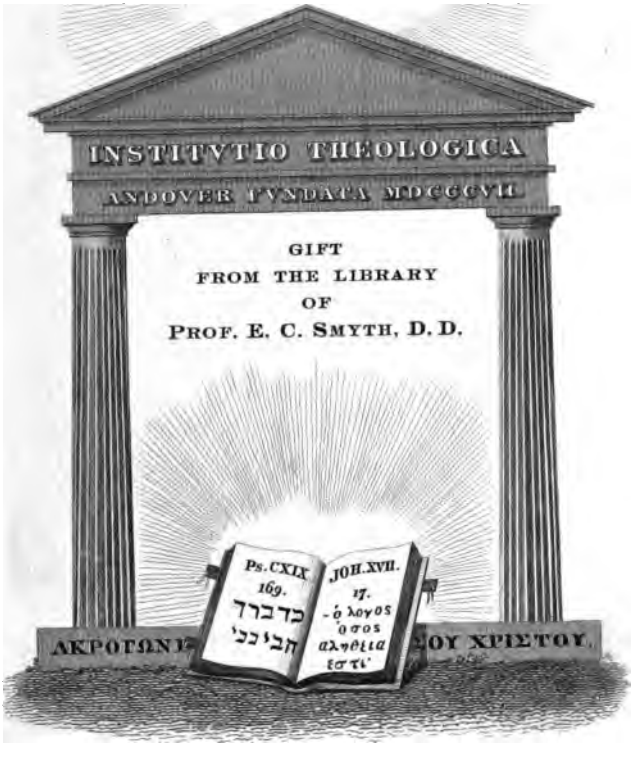
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Mary S Johnson

A SILVER CORD — LOOSED

In Memoriam

MARY STODDARD JOHNSON

Ave, anima candida!

CAMBRIDGE
Printed at the Riverside Press
1891

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The ladies connected with the Wednesday Morning Bible Class held a service in the Chapel of the Old South Church, February 18th, in memory of Mary Stoddard Johnson. For the many friends who were unable to be present, as well as for the more enduring remembrance of those who participated in these exercises, it has been thought suitable to gather in a more permanent form the addresses of this occasion, supplementing them by extracts from letters.

If, from these many-sided views of the character of our dear friend, a more distinct picture is retained, and others are inspired to strive for that beauty of holiness so manifest in her life, the endeavor of the editor will have been realized.

G. H. C.

Obituary.

JOHNSON. — In Boston, Feb. 3, 1891, MARY STODDARD, daughter of the late Charles Stoddard and wife of Samuel Johnson.

The ancestors of Mrs. Johnson settled in Boston in 1630. The blood of Colonel John Stoddard, the commander of his Majesty's forces in New England, and of the Rev. Solomon Stoddard, for sixty years pastor of the church in Northampton, ran in her veins. By her maternal grandmother she was descended from the Tappan family. Sarah Tappan, who married Solomon Stoddard, of Northampton, Mass., was the sister of Arthur, Lewis, and John Tappan, eminent philanthropists and Christians, whose names are linked to much that has been done for the glory of God and the good of man in the nineteenth century. Her father, Charles Stoddard, was a merchant in Boston for half a century — holding positions of trust in many charities and institutions, but specially noted for his connection with the American Board of Missions and the Old South Church. Her mother is the daughter of the Hon. Daniel Noble, of Williamstown, Mass., and the widow of Prof. William A. Porter, of Williams College.

Mrs. Johnson inherited the vigorous mind, the resolute will, and the benevolent disposition of her ancestors. She had the best culture which Boston schools afforded, and she used her opportunities wisely and well. Both before and after her marriage she traveled extensively in Europe and in her own country, and was acquainted with the men and the literature of her times. Long periods of invalidism compelled her absence from society, but she found pleasure in congenial literary pursuits, and especially in planning and executing benevolent works. No day passed that had not been made useful to some other life; no hour was selfishly spent. The extent of her personal influence was remarkable, and hundreds who have never seen her face live to mourn her loss and to bless her memory. Her house in Boston was a centre of elegant Christian hospitality, and the summer home at Nahant was the welcome resort of the Christian society which her husband and she especially sought. She stretched forth her hands to the poor, — yea, she reached forth her hands to the needy; and the blessings of many that were ready to perish have rested upon her. She lived a cheerful, useful, and consecrated life as a devoted daughter, an affectionate sister, a beloved and helpful wife, and a child of God who bore her heavenly Father's will patiently, and received the summons to enter into his presence joyfully. She is "forever with the Lord."

A CHARACTER SKETCH.

By MRS. JOSEPH COOK.

In many respects, Mrs. Johnson was the choicest spirit I have ever met. Strength, sweetness, symmetry, unselfishness, and a most delicate and constant thoughtfulness for others, were traits which we seldom see so prominently manifest in any one character as in hers.

Much might be said of her connection with various charitable organizations, but it was in quiet and unrecorded benefactions that she endeared herself to all who came into any personal relation of service to her. These were her loyal and devoted admirers while she lived, and now that she has vanished from our sight they mourn her loss with unfeigned sorrow.

Other Christian women may be kind and considerate to those who serve them, but I

doubt if there are many who show such friendly sympathy and delicate charity with no trace of patronage. She remembered not only the physical needs of those less fortunate than herself, but she did not forget that they, too, have intellectual, æsthetic, and spiritual aspirations which are rarely gratified. And so to one she would send an Easter lily when that glad festival arrived, or a choice water-color at Christmas time, or a helpful book as a birthday remembrance.

To one who was shut out from much of the joy of life by almost total deafness, she made reading an object by the suggestion that she compile a Calendar of Brave Deeds. I know that Mrs. Johnson helped this one in collecting examples of heroism, and then took upon herself the expense of publishing the calendar, while all receipts from the sale were to go to the one for whom she had planned this stimulating and diverting occupation.

She has for years lived in the practical exemplification of the idea to which most of us

are just waking up, that the People (with a capital P) are, as Walter Besant says, "just like *other* people." And her thoughtful consideration of the comfort and well-being of those who came to do her some service has kept many a soul sweet which would otherwise have been embittered in the daily contact with the thoughtless and inconsiderate.

You know how Emerson puts it: "Generosity does not consist in giving money or money's worth. These so-called *goods* are only the shadow of good. We owe to man higher succors than food and fire. We owe to man *man*. The great depend on their heart, not on their purse."

She always found time for doing little kindnesses, —

> "By most left undone or despised;
> For nought that set one heart at ease,
> And giveth happiness or peace,
> Was low-esteeméd in her eyes."

I will not quote the whole of Lowell's well-known poem, but to me it is more nearly a description of Mrs. Johnson than of any woman I ever met.

I never heard her speak an unkind word of any human being. Gossip was utterly foreign to her nature.

She never talked about herself, nor her family, nor the domestic arrangements of her household, — so dear and prolific a topic with many women. She might have been a bird of the air or a flower, so far as any allusion was ever made to the prosaic details of daily life. Not that she seemed to be making a conscious effort to keep these topics out of her conversation, but she was interested in higher themes, — in books, in art, in music, in the great questions of the day touching reform, and preëminently in all that related to the inner spiritual life and to whatever furthered the speedy establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth. She was greatly stirred last spring by that devoted young English girl, Lucy Guinness, who was Mrs. Johnson's guest for several days, and whose presence in her home she felt to be a benediction. When I remember Mrs. Johnson's whole-souled responsiveness to the lofty

spiritual mood of this young evangelist, and her eager hope that some young people who were brought in contact with her might catch her spirit, I wonder we did not foresee that she was ripening for another world than ours. In a month the stroke came which was the beginning of the end.

There was something always ideal about her. Though environed by luxury, and tempted by her delicate health and the watchful, lover-like attentions of her husband and sons to self-indulgence, I think you in this church will bear witness that she was constantly doing more than her strength warranted. She had in such large measure "a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize," that all who knew her went to her with their joys and sorrows, so sure were they of awakening in her a quick response.

She was immensely superior to *things*, and, although surrounded by all that wealth could buy, one felt that her judgment of others and her own happiness in life were independent of material prosperity.

She loved her friends for what they were in themselves, and often took those into her most intimate confidence who were unknown to the social circle in which she moved. With proper observance of social conventionalities, she was never in bondage to them. One felt sure that she would always do the *right* thing as judged by society, and the *kind* thing as judged by the Golden Rule.

It was this spontaneity and freedom from cast-iron social rules, combined with her lovely character, that gave her that subtle quality we call *charm.* She seemed to me to have the freshness of a delicate spring flower, and I was pleased to have my impression echoed by a literary friend in New York, who writes: "Little as I knew her, I loved her. She breathed about her the sweetness of her nature, like the fresh, cool fragrance of violets brought from the pure outer air into a warm room."

Many a man, doing valiant service in the forefront of the battle of life, can testify to Mrs. Johnson's wise counsel and encouraging

sympathy in the trying moments of life. One to whom her friendship was an inspiration says:

"No human life is perfect; but hers was one of the nearest so it was ever my fortune to know. She kept the simplicity and sweetness of childhood always. . . . If there is any good in me, I owe a good part of it to that noble woman. She held my faith steady when it might have gone forever but for her. I have no words to express what I owe to her."

And another acknowledges his personal indebtedness to her in these words: —

"While many misunderstood and misrepresented me, she always showed herself my firm friend, and I shall never forget it. She has gone, but her gentle spirit seems to linger like a benediction. Her beautiful Christian character had its influence upon me always, and seems now additionally strong, standing out in fine relief against the world's dark background."

In examining nearly two hundred letters

written since Mrs. Johnson's death, I have been struck with nothing more than the wide range of people whom she touched. From veteran missionaries and theological professors to middle-aged men of business and young men in society; from women of culture and education to the incurable invalid who writes a penciled note from her couch of suffering; from the overworked country minister's wife to gay young girls with little thought beyond the pleasure of the hour, — all testify to their appreciation of this sweet, unselfish life.

Little children of the poor regarded her as a fairy godmother. "Is not she the angel lady?" asked the children of their teacher in a certain school she visited. She appealed to what was highest and best in every soul she came near, and she stimulated every one to do his best and to be true to his conception of truth.

Men held her in reverential admiration, but women loved her with loyal devotion. If the sweetest thing on earth is *to be loved,*

then of that sweetness Mrs. Johnson's cup was full to the brim.

Mrs. Johnson was fond of the best literature. She read books, and not simply reviews of books. Even in her last illness, when her physician advised light and humorous reading, to divert her mind without fatiguing it, she rebelled against this mental pabulum, and called for "good books." Many years of her life she had been shut in by a semi-invalidism; but, in spite of delicate health, she made it a rule to devote the winter months to systematic reading and study. She could read the great French, Italian, and German classics in the original, and she had conversational fluency in French and Italian. She was a Dantean scholar, spending three winters in the study of "The Divine Comedy." With a cultured lady, who was both her teacher and friend, she read the poem in the original, one canto at a time, making a thorough and exhaustive study of it, following out the historical and classical allusions, and reading the literature bearing upon it. The sonnets of Michel

Angelo were special favorites of hers. Vittoria Colonna was one of her heroines, as were also Olympia Morata and Rénée of Ferrara.

With the great French orators she was perfectly familiar — Bossuet, Fléchier, Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Jacques Saurin. She made a special study of the history of the early Christian church, and her literary work a year ago this winter was devoted to the first three centuries of the Christian church, beginning with the ten great persecutions.

Among English poets, Milton and Wordsworth, George Herbert and Tennyson, and the two Brownings, were her favorites. Although perfectly familiar with our American poets, Bryant was, perhaps, the best loved, from his interpretations of Nature.

Biographies of great and good men and women were always most interesting to her. She herself has added to the world's riches in this line by the Memorials she has given us of her father, and from him she may have inherited this special taste, as she quotes him as saying: "I have been long in the habit of

reading well-written biographies of good men; and think they are of excellent influence when well-prepared, and where the character was truly excellent." Reading, as I have recently, these Memorials for the first time, I find much in them which accounts for many excellencies in Mrs. Johnson's character by way of inheritance and early instruction. It was a motto Deacon Stoddard early gave his children, "I wish you to talk of things or events, not persons."

From the time when, at four years of age, she could repeat twenty hymns from memory, the great hymns of the church were dear to her. She knew them in their various translations, and the repeating of them on her invalid's couch helped her to triumph over many a depressing hour of physical weakness. Mme. Harney writes me: "Our dear one took the deepest interest in the beautiful Latin hymns of the mediæval church. The translations of Dean Trench, Dr. John Mason Neale, Lord Lindsay, and many others were familiar to her.

"'The Celestial Country' of Bernard of Cluny, as translated by Dr. Neale, was a great favorite of hers. She repeated it to me, nearly all, while reclining on the rocks at Beverly last summer. . . . Five or six weeks ago, one Sunday afternoon, I read to her several of these hymns, and as I read them she would repeat certain stanzas, and would say: 'Is not that Ray Palmer's? Is not that McKenzie's?' showing how she remembered our study of them years ago.

"Last Good Friday we read together the 'Stabat Mater' and its companion hymn, 'Stabat Mater Speciosa.' This hymn very much interested her, for it was the last work of Dr. Neale, and several times I have read it to her at Christmas. She saw beauty in all the translations of 'The Dies Iræ,' but I think Dr. Iron's was her favorite.

"Catherine Winkworth's translation of 'Veni Sancte Spiritus' was a great favorite. I can hear her reciting: —

> 'Come, Holy Ghost! Thou fire divine!
> From highest heaven on us down shine!
> Comforter, be Thy comfort mine!

'Come, Father of the poor, to earth;
Come with Thy gifts of precious worth;
Come, Light of all of mortal birth!

'Thou rich in comfort! Ever blest
The heart where Thou art constant guest,
Who giv'st the heavy-laden rest.'"

The day after she left us, the following lines, which she herself wrote in 1873, were found among her papers. Her mind had been brooding over these passages of Scripture: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," and "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," and thus she breaks out into sacred song: —

Why should we ever restless roam,
  Seeking new phantoms every day,
When God has promised us a home,
  A 'dwelling place' where we may stay?

His love, this dwelling for the soul,
  Prepared in ages long since past,
Prophets and saints its rest have told,
  Its glories, too, which always last.

If there I dwell in humble love,
  With Him my heart shall find repose.

This 'secret place' He keeps above,
And guards the soul from earthly foes.

Lord, may I seek with all my heart
To dwell with Thee e'en here below,
That Thou may'st grant to me a part
In 'mansions' safe from every woe.

Fond of reading as Mrs. Johnson was, the Bible had the first place in her reverential and studious regard. If we ask ourselves, Where did she gain the secret of her pure and beautiful and marvelously unselfish life? we shall find the answer here, — in the prayerful study of God's Word.

Although born and bred in the Congregational form of worship, I know she often found it helpful to keep for her own spiritual profit the anniversaries of Christ's life on the earth emphasized by Episcopalians. I have known her to keep the entire Lenten season. Each year she observed Passion Week, and the Easter festival was a day of spiritual rejoicing with her.

There are others who know more about her technical knowledge of music than I, but I

know well that the best music was to her both a rest and an inspiration, and her educated ear, combined with unusual sensitiveness, gave her the power to interpret what she heard. She used to say to me: "Do you not feel that, while some music appeals to what is highest and holiest, other strains awaken only the sensuous, and seem to leave one relaxed and disintoned morally?"

Her love of nature was intense, and her acquaintance with mountains, lakes, groves, and the bending skies had become so intimate, in long summers of outdoor life, that when, a few years ago, she began to try her skill in water-color reproductions, she surprised her friends, and her teacher as well, by the readiness and ease with which she was able to express what she saw. She had the power of seizing the happy moment in the phases of nature, and was able to get the effect without following the ordinary rules of technique. Her rapid fingers would try to catch the still more rapid working of her mind.

She herself used to laugh, in her merry, self-depreciating way, at her own audacity; but there was a certain poetic charm in all her sketches, and it was beautiful to see the happiness she had in this unsuspected power of expression. As she painted for the love of it, she allowed herself widest range, and went from flowers to mountains and marines. A bunch of chrysanthemums she gave me one Christmas look as though thrown from the celestial spaces, and floating earthward through the clouds.

But the right hand was to lose its cunning. The bright, eager mind, undimmed by disease, was to feel fettered and imprisoned by the encumbering clay; and in the three interviews I had with her, after my return from the Pacific coast, I noticed a certain restlessness which was at variance with her usual calm poise. She was intensely interested in all I could tell her of Southern California, — its sunny skies, equable climate, orange groves, and tropical luxuriance of flowers. She longed for sunshine and an out-of-door

life. We thought she would be able to go to our own South, but God had better things in store for her than we dreamed.

That celestial country of which she loved to sing was about to open its pearly gates to her, and the brief word to her devoted husband, showing that she knew she was about to go, seems like a last message to each of us who loved her: "You would not keep me from this happiness."

A FRIEND OF THE POOR.

By MRS. GEORGE A. GORDON.

Some of us, who have known Mrs. Johnson for so many years, have met this morning to speak of her work in connection with this church, and with various societies in our city. We desire, also, to unite in expressing our sorrow at the loss of one who was not only a fellow-laborer with us at all times, but who will ever be remembered by many as a sincere and loving friend.

From the few facts I have been enabled to collect in reference to her work for some of God's needy children in this city, I am sure we shall ourselves be stimulated to do more and better in the future than we have done hitherto.

It has been somewhat difficult to find the names of societies of which she was a member, as, during her long residence in this

city, she belonged to many of them at various times. Another reason is, that, in all her generous giving, she was governed by the beautiful Christian principle of not allowing her right hand to know what her left hand did.

Among many benevolent enterprises, she was at one time greatly interested in the "Children's Hospital," and later on in the "Bethesda Society." For two years she taught music to some of the girls in the Bethesda Home, and by her personal interest encouraged and strengthened many of them in their endeavors to lead industrious and respectable lives.

The cruel treatment of the helpless Indians on the Western reservations appealed to her sense of justice, and for two years she served on the executive committee of our Massachusetts Indian Association, which endeavors to educate public sentiment in regard to these poor creatures.

One society, however, had a very strong claim upon her heart, and its work was

especially dear to her. This was the "Society for the Employment of Bible Readers," and she was among the most active and influential of its supporters as long as she lived. Indeed, she was one of the founders of this society, which was organized at her house on March 20, 1868, the constitution being adopted and officers elected at that time. But it was not until May 12, 1874, that it became an incorporated society. During these many years, Mrs. Johnson gave her advice, sympathy, and encouragement to all those actively engaged in this noble work. It surely will be most interesting to us all, if some extracts are quoted from a note written recently by the president of this society. She says: "I can only say that our 'Bible Readers' Society' was an outcome from the old 'Female Auxiliary Bible Society,' now extinct, and I have always understood the reason to have been, the objection on the part of the old society to have women missionaries employed in this city. Mrs. Johnson always believed in personal influence, and longed

to have the comforts and instruction in gospel truth carried to the homes of the poor. The meeting for the organization of this society was held at her house, which has all these years been headquarters, so to speak, for Bible Readers. At one time, when the funds were low, she engaged artists and gave a successful reading in her spacious rooms. Always her heart and her purse were open to the many calls. Then, too, we relied on her judgment, as well as her sympathy. No difficult question has ever been decided without her approval, and many times we have known her to save the society from serious error by her decision, and prompt and fearless action. The Bible Readers fairly idolized her. No wonder, for she never refused to listen to their accounts, even in her busy life, and to plan relief in some way." Surely this is a most beautiful tribute from one who knew Mrs. Johnson intimately, and who had been closely associated with her for so long a time in this important work.

There still remains one more society with

which Mrs. Johnson was identified during the last few years of her life, and which touched the tenderest chords of her own soul as she entered into fellowship with many whose mysterious share in the world's life was inactivity and suffering, and whose faces she never saw.

This work of blessed influence is known as "The Shut-In Society," and its members from chambers of pain and weariness send comforting and inspiring messages to one another.

> "For whom the heart of man shuts out,
> Sometimes the heart of God shuts in."

We, in our abundant health, hardly realize what this interchange of Christian thought and experience must be to these many souls, who in most cases never leave their room, or even their bed. How welcome to their eyes is the letter from one united to them by the sacred ties of similar suffering, or from one who out of the richness of a happy life gives them the tender sympathy, and bright and wholesome inspiration, which they have longed for!

Mrs. Johnson was in constant correspondence with some of the members of this society, and two years ago, at Christmas time, she sent copies of some of Miss Havergal's helpful little books to every member, nearly two hundred in all. She was deeply interested in special individuals, whom she never met, and they will miss most sincerely the familiar writing and the words ever prompted by her affectionate regard for their comfort.

From one of these correspondents, a Miss Warren, in the State of New York, a letter, written since Mrs. Johnson's death, has been received. It is full of deep sympathy for all who like herself have lost a warm friend. I will quote only a few of the sentences: "I was greatly surprised as well as grieved to hear that my dear, kind friend had died. She wrote me at Christmas time a lovely letter, and presented me with a dear little silver cross badge that I wear." Towards the close of the letter she says: "Yes, dear Mrs. Johnson pays for my 'Youth's Companion,' and has done so for some years past. How I

would miss it! But my subscription is not out till June. I will let you know then. I suffer terribly, but Jesus is ever near."

The members of this society with whom Mrs. Johnson corresponded will not be forgotten. A niece has taken up the pen she laid down, and through her they will continue to feel that there is warm human sympathy in the busy world from which they are shut in, to glorify God in their daily lives of patient suffering, and serve Him in love and trust, until they reach the land where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

I cannot close this brief sketch of Mrs. Johnson's work, in connection with a few of our societies, without alluding to the fact that although she was greatly interested in public charities, yet any mention of her Christian activity would be incomplete that did not at least refer to the large number of persons to whom she ever gave most generously, and with such delicate appreciation of their sensitiveness that her assistance could not be refused. As she modestly concealed all these

acts done in her Master's name, it hardly seems right to mention them here. Still, even she could not object, if, by the allusion to them, other souls might be incited to similar efforts to do good in quiet, unostentatious ways.

> "She kept her line of rectitude
> With love's unconscious ease;
> Her kindly instincts understood
> All gentle courtesies.
>
> "The dear Lord's best interpreters
> Are humble human souls;
> The gospel of a life like hers
> Is more than books or scrolls."

As an illustration of her thoughtfulness for those in the humble walks of life who served her, I wish to mention the large number of cabmen, who never waited at her door for any length of time, in cold or stormy weather, but that they were summoned to receive the cup of hot coffee or tea that saved some of them from yielding to the desire for the heated poison that would bring such misery into their homes.

There is only time to allude to one more evidence of her unselfish thought for others. This last summer, she was compelled to stay in the city until late in August. But her heart prompted her to give the means that enabled several overworked persons to go away into the rest and refreshment of the green hills and fragrant woods for which she longed.

After months of weary waiting, she has gone from us, leaving in the world the influence of a strong Christian life, and fragments of tender memories for us to gather up and cherish in our hearts.

"Death takes us by surprise,
And stays our hurrying feet;
The great design unfinished lies,
Our lives are incomplete.

"But in the dark unknown
Perfect their circles seem,
Even as a bridge's arch of stone
Is rounded in the stream.

"Alike are life and death,
When life in death survives,
And the uninterrupted breath
Inspires a thousand lives."

A CHRISTIAN WORKER.

By MISS ABBIE WALLEY.

It is an unusual event in the history of the Old South Church when two of its valued members are called on the same day to pass from the church militant to the church triumphant; and, while we rejoice in their happiness, we come on this day with saddened hearts to speak of their love and devotion to this ancient church, hoping that we shall be led to greater zeal.

Mrs. Samuel Johnson was connected with the history of the Old South Church for fifty years, and for two hundred years members of the Stoddard family have worshiped in this church.

Her ancestors have been characterized by intense devotion to the service of God, and among them we find the name of Jonathan Edwards.

Her father, the late Deacon Charles Stoddard, was a valued and beloved officer in this church for many years, and the teacher of a large Bible class for young men, but his character shone with especial lustre in the home circle. His chief desire was that his children should grow up to be earnest Christians.

When Mrs. Johnson was only thirteen months old, her father wrote her a letter, in which he sent her a hundred kisses, "but he desired most of all," he continued, "to see her a child of God and an heir of glory." When she was four years of age, her father tells of her being able to repeat twenty hymns perfectly. When she was seven, he writes: "I want you to ask the Saviour every day how to live and how to please Him, for without Him you cannot be happy." Once more he writes: "I love to kneel down and pray to God for you, my sweet Mary, that God would give you a new heart."

The bud so carefully nourished blossomed into the fragrant flower.

While quite young, she became a member of the Sunday-school, and the little girl with the plaid dress and plush bonnet is still remembered.

Passing from one class to another, she was for some time under the instruction of our late beloved friend, Madam Johnson, and could one help developing when under her care? Later, Mrs. Johnson became a teacher in the Lowell Street Sunday-school, which was under the charge of the Old South Society.

In 1858, soon after Dr. Manning had become one of the pastors, Mrs. Johnson joined the Old South Church. From that time her love for it was very strong, and she was continually planning ways and means to increase its spiritual growth. Although often laid aside by illness, her mind was still active, and the idea of many a successful project may be traced to her couch. She felt very strongly that women united in church fellowship should work together with lofty desires and purposes, and was never tired

of doing her part towards the accomplishment of this end. Gifted by nature with literary ability of a high order, with an intense love of music and the beautiful in nature, she consecrated all her talents to that Master whose service was perfect joy.

She was very desirous that the young ladies in the church should take an active part in its work, and, while paying my own tribute of gratitude to her, I wish all young ladies in this church had an equally kind friend to take them by the hand, and show them where they could find true happiness.

Mrs. Johnson added much to the interest of a literary club, sustained by the young people of this church, by a paper on music, made still more entertaining by the accompaniment of Scotch songs sung by a cousin from across the sea.

At eleven o'clock on Wednesday morning Mrs. Johnson was invariably to be found, when health permitted, in this little room. The Foreign Missionary meetings were especially dear to her. She was brought up

from childhood in the atmosphere of missions. In the Memorial of her father, she speaks of "his love of nature being so strong that he had transformed a sunny back-yard into a cheerful garden"; and one distinct picture in the memory of her childhood is "Mar Johannan, a Nestorian bishop, during his stay in America, sitting in his Oriental costume in this garden, smoking his long nargileh pipe."

Missions meant something real to her, and she was very anxious that all the ladies in our church should have a share in carrying on this glorious work.

In March, 1883, she became one of the vice-presidents of our Auxiliary; and while her venerable mother's name still stands in its honored place as president of our society, the daughter has passed on to work in a higher sphere.

Visit with me the quiet cemetery in the beautiful town of Northampton, and it will be easy to trace the origin of her ardent missionary spirit; for here are the graves, not

only of her beloved father and Solomon Stoddard, for sixty years the pastor of the church in that town, but also of her uncle David Stoddard, the well-known missionary, near whom rests the dust of David Brainerd.

Others will speak of the weekly meeting for Bible study; but can we not trace her first interest in the ladies' prayer-meeting to a little book sent to her by her father, giving an account of the first one ever started in this church one hundred years before, by a young lady who afterwards became Mrs. Abigail Waters, whose portrait you have often seen in our church parlor, and who was a blood relation of Mrs. Johnson?

I have not time to allude to the different societies in the church, with which she was connected. The Home Missionary Society, the Sewing Circle, and the poor everywhere will miss her. Does she not send back a message to us to be up and doing, for the time is short?

A FAITHFUL BIBLE STUDENT.

By MRS. HAMILTON A. HILL.

In the story of Naaman we read that the servants of the Syrian general said to him, on his refusal to wash in Jordan, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" This feeling of Naaman is a very common one with all of us. The great opportunities, the more striking duties, the larger societies, engage our interest and call forth our strongest endeavor. They appeal to our emotions and to our imagination. Frequently, therefore, it is the smaller duties, the less conspicuous engagements, the oft-recurring and almost monotonous means of grace, which test our faithfulness, our perseverance, our Christian steadfastness.

We have heard of the large interests and

charities of our beloved friend, but I am very glad that, at this hour, and in this room where I have so many times sat by her side, I should have been asked to speak of her in her relation to this Wednesday Morning Bible Class.

What she has been in helpfulness to those who have gathered here in this class cannot be told. Even if it could be put into words, we would not do it. Such experiences are too sacred for words; they belong to the secret things which cannot be revealed; but we may speak of her faithfulness in this relation. Each Wednesday morning, with rare exceptions, in spite of all the many and varied calls upon her time and thoughts, she was in her place, in fair weather and in storm. She never hesitated to do her part, when necessary, in sustaining the meetings, and in encouraging others in their efforts to do the same.

It is the one place above all others in which I shall ever think of her, — of her pleasant greetings, her quick sympathy, her ready ques-

tions, her comments on the Scripture lessons, her occasional but always real and fervent prayers. There we were all on a footing of equality, studying together the great questions of life, death, and the beyond, all earnestly seeking after the truth, longing to discover the meaning of the deep things about which we studied. We like to think of her now as having entered not only into the joy of her Lord, and into the rewards of a righteous life, but also into the knowledge of all these many mysteries which she and we alike have sought to comprehend. Here, with open Bibles, we have sat together in this room, which, through these many precious associations with her and with others who have now gone from us, as well as with dear friends still with us, has become to us a sacred place, as Bethel to the patriarch of old.

MRS. EDWIN WRIGHT, the leader of this Bible Class, says: —

MY own relationship with Mrs. Johnson was mainly confined to our Foreign Mission-

ary work and Bible study, and our frequent conferences always included these topics.

How I miss her familiar presence at our meetings for prayer, and the contemplation of God's Word, I cannot express. Her own interest manifested itself in a careful preparation of the themes proposed; in prompt response to questions asked, or practical truths deduced; and in a conscientious readiness to lead our devotions, without respect to personal inclination or condition. Her uniform Christian cheerfulness; freedom from unkind criticism or judgment; daily devotion to the good of others, in little things as well as great; the conscientious use of her wealth, which was to her a trust; her efforts to comfort, encourage, and stimulate, both by printed page and familiar letter, those whom she could not readily meet; her invariable presence at our Wednesday morning and Friday evening meetings, unless prevented by decided illness; the careful disposition of her time to embrace regularly her Christian duties and privileges, and yet

offer to family and friends a large-hearted hospitality; the humility which hid from others the acquirements which intellectual tastes and culture had yielded her; the total absence of all assumption or ostentation, — all these made her life and character lovely to contemplate, and her friendship to be highly valued.

The abiding impression her life has left upon me is that of the unconscious, natural expression of a spirit in complete self-surrender to the will of God.

Thus, her right hand in that of her Father, she was, without foreboding or misgiving, equally faithful in things small or great.

At a meeting of the "Society for the Employment of Bible Readers, in Boston," on Wednesday, March 11, 1891, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted: —

Whereas, We have heard with profound regret of the death of our late associate, Mrs. Samuel Johnson, it is our desire to put upon record our sense of her superior worth as one of our most valued officers.

Mrs. Johnson assisted in the organization of this society, and its first meeting was held at her house, March 20, 1868.

The work of this society she held in unfaltering regard during this long period of twenty-three years. To her the Bible was the Book of books, and it was from childhood the inspiration of her life.

She was loyal to the traditions, and reflected the influence, of a long line of Christian ancestry. She gladly coöperated in the employment of special "Readers" who might go among the poor and suffering with the comfort of God's Holy Word.

Her labors of love and charity exalted her life, and render our sense of personal loss the greater because our officers and Bible Readers looked to her for counsel, and relied upon her judgment and guidance.

It is resolved, That this minute be recorded upon the books of this society; also, that a copy of these resolutions regarding our late friend, Mrs. Samuel Johnson, be sent to her husband and family, trusting that it

may convey to them a most tender expression of our regard and sympathy as a society.

Respectfully submitted by its committee.

ELIZABETH M. TUCKER,
President.

ELLEN S. S. HAMMOND,
Secretary.

MINNIE C. WOODS.

OTHER TRIBUTES.

SHUT IN AND SET FREE.[1]

By ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

Probably the ideal biography can be written only by the consensus of many friends. A human character is a prism; each soul that approaches it closely enough to understand it receives a ray; the rainbow is the result. Perhaps the rainbow which at this moment thrills across the sunbeam on the window of my study, and throbs upon the ceiling, and wakes the barren little "furnished" house to the glory that upholstery giveth not and bric-a-brac could not bestow, has moved the thought which opens this memorial column; since the prism on the window-ledge was her gift of whom I write, and its pretty power to bring brightness into narrow windows, and its gen-

[1] From *The Congregationalist.*

tle hint to look for rainbows after stormy days, came from a life that caught all the sunshine it could and cast it generously where it might. The prism, a long-past Christmas gift, came from a sick-room to a sick-room. No moral lesson accompanied it, nor superfluous spiritual exhortation. It told its own story, delicately, unobtrusively, tenderly, — like the giver; and, like herself, left its own rainbows to cool and still the restless heart.

That we know only "in part," and are known "in part," is profound philosophy as well as good Bible, and the angle of a friend's life which one is permitted to see with the eyes of one's soul is the only one worth making over to others.

A lovely woman died in Boston a little while ago, and a word of farewell blessing may fittingly follow her. I speak of Mary Stoddard Johnson, daughter of Deacon and Mrs. Stoddard and wife of Samuel Johnson. She was beloved by so many people, and in so many ways and for so many reasons, that she can need little from me, unless it

be to add my one ray to the prism, — my brightest memory of her to the rainbow of her beautiful life. All people impress us for some one trait, and the thing which I recall most vividly in recalling her is her way of bearing the imprisonment and denial of invalidism.

Harriet Martineau saw fit to write a book on this gloomy subject, which has found thousands of well readers, and perhaps never repelled one. Mrs. Johnson left that other book, that rarer, sweeter, finer book of suffering life borne like an easy one, and deprivation accepted like delight. She had enough of health to know the springs of it, and kept a healthy view of joys which she could not share.

During the invalid years of her life, which were broken by intervals of much comparative comfort and a condition that was rather delicacy than illness, she left upon many, as she did upon myself, the effect of a vivid personality remarkably adjusted to a fate that came hard to it. By nature she was the essence of

life. Vivacity, frolic, activity, the good times of this world and the enjoyment thereof, came easily to her. She was no thin-spirited nature, born invalid and taking to expressed piety because there was not enough of it to understand robust, natural human life. Beyond question she was "made," as we say, for a merry, active story.

When that condition which is neither dying nor living crept upon her, — that semi-invalidism which is the hardest thing in the world to be understood except by the sufferer, that state from which it always seems as if one might get up and recover next week, if one only knew it, — she battled and fell in a characteristic silence. She was a woman of sweet, as well as deep, reserve. Whatever the writhing as the fetters clasped, it had no witness. As years brought the fate, they taught the way to bear it.

Now developed in this gay-hearted, life-loving woman the very angel of Christian pluck. One scarcely understood how much she suffered, — she seemed to enjoy so much.

We came away from her happy room, and remembered with chagrin that it was of *ourselves* she had spoken, — our trouble, our pain, our hope or worry, or good fortune. Herself the last to think about herself, the last to talk about herself, her couch became a throne of sweetness and light from which she held out a bright sceptre that touched with tenderness the hearts and lives of those who loved her. "They talked a good deal about their own things," was the severest criticism I ever heard her pass upon any friends of hers.

We all know how easy it is for one invalid woman to make a whole household — especially a masculine household — systematically miserable. The devotion of husband and sons kneeled joyfully before this delicate woman. No intimate guest can forget the reverent manner, the gentle footfall, the instinctive and happy adjustment of well life to sick life, in that home. Be sure that the sick-room which can command such consideration incloses a lovely soul.

Mrs. Johnson's life reached far beyond the walls of her cheerful home. Heart and mind brimmed over with effort to help the helpless. Inherited devoutness of nature, and the acquired kind of Christian character which only sickness and solitude can bestow, led her to work largely in the religious veins of life's large mines. Home missions and foreign missions and Bible readings and church interests had their unassailable places in her generous remembrance. But she did not stop there. She never, like the wealthy lady of whom we read recently, had to ask a friend "if she could tell her of any good causes!" Her life was crowded with something better than causes; it overflowed with *people*. To be a little out of the usual "run" of charities, to be overlooked, to be poor and not say so, to be friendless and not complain of it, to be in any of the kinds of trouble that are most easily passed by upon the other side, — this was to appeal to that quiet sympathy and that refinement of help which kept the self-respect of the recipient unbruised. The people who

served her, the attendants of her illness, the refined and struggling woman who confided a heart's history to her, — these were sure of her. At her death came a revelation. The tributes which poured in from people whom she had helped out of some kind of trouble were so many that they almost lifted hers out of the list of private histories, — she seemed like a public dispenser of mercy.

One of the dearest of her beneficences was the "Shut-in Society," which ministers to the sick. Many a darkened room into which she never stepped bewails her, and many haggard eyes which never saw her face fill to-day at the mention of her name. She has left us a beautiful memory of the way in which one of the sorest kinds of human denial can be — one scarcely says borne, but — worn. It was truly a crown upon her gentle head.

The "shut-ins," thank God, have their blessed correlate, which, for want of a better term, we may call set free. Happy the patient soul that passes from this to that, in the peace which does not ask to be understood!

IN MEMORIAM.

By GRACE A. OLIVER.

The name of Mary Stoddard Johnson is one which recalls many tender memories and loving thoughts. This rare and gracious woman appeared to be the flower of a long line of Puritan ancestry. She had the true womanly nature which makes a home a centre for all, and into her presence one came as if with a benediction. Her fine spirit was never broken by the long years of suffering, and the weaknesses and trials of ill health never left her a querulous or complaining invalid. She triumphed, with an abounding and genuine faith born of inward sight and earnest religious belief, over sufferings which would have daunted many.

She accepted her lot, and the limitations which ill health gave to her activity, cheerfully, patiently, and with true philosophy as

well as Christian resignation. But she never allowed her own ill health to be made an excuse for forgetting others'. Years of intimacy only increased the impression she gave of possessing a rare nature. She had wide sympathies, and many went to her for strength and courage. She had, of course, friends who had more in common with her than others, but so large was her nature, so liberal her range of thought, that a very wide circle of friends will mourn her loss. To the very last of her life, while consciousness lasted, she was the same tender, thoughtful friend to whom we had always gone for love and sympathy. How deep the loss of her friends, but how much more that of her family, which cannot be expressed! The devotion of years, which love had given her, must be the great comfort now of the husband who had made her his first earthly care.

Mrs. Johnson was an honored member of society. She bore her part always in all good works, and only her own unwillingness to let her right hand know the work of her left

prevented her constant and unceasing good works from being known.

She never desired social prominence, but without any effort that was hers — for she graced any circle in which she moved, being as accomplished as she was intelligent, a lover of literature, music, and art — she was well fitted by nature to adorn the most cultivated society. While admitting always gracefully and fully the claims of social life, hers was too earnest a nature to be content with the trifles of life. She had deep convictions, which she never forced upon her friends, but one felt that in her presence there was purity, peace, and truth, — "the truth which makes us free."

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

A GREATLY revered and life-long friend of the family writes: —

"I began to visit her father's house in 1836, and visited it very often in 1858, when I became much interested in her whom I shall see no more in this life. . . . It was always delightful to meet her, she was so kindly, intelligent, and cheerful. . . . I have been called to investigate lately the prolonged history of Mrs. Johnson's ancestors, and have intended to write to her concerning some of them; but she is now with them, and has seen them in the heavenly places. They were shining examples to the church on earth, and she is shining with them in the church triumphant. . . . It is certainly delightful to reflect that the name of her who has now gone to the better world awakens so many good memories in the minds of those who remain in this

world. I can say of very few persons what I can say of her: I have known her for thirty-three years, and cannot recall a single unpleasant word or look in her conversation or countenance; every utterance has been right, and every expression of her face has been winning. She has inherited a good name and an excellent character. Divine grace has beautified what was given to her by divine love through her saintly ancestors. We cannot so much as imagine how much more beautiful her character has become since she has rejoined the friends who have gone before her, and especially since she has 'seen the Lord.' When her friends think of her as she is now with her Redeemer, it seems strange that they can be saddened at her departure. It is far better to think of the mansions she has entered than of the house which she has left. May her Lord still continue to abide in that house!"

Numerous letters contain words like the following: —

"She has in many ways been the dearest and best friend I and my family have ever known, and the influence she had over us will last as long as life."

This expression occurs in many letters: —

"She has been to me the ideal of all womanly loveliness."

A contemporary and friend of her father's writes: —

"Mrs. Johnson was a very lovely woman, and I know she was highly esteemed by a wide circle of friends. She had all the intelligence, the grace, and the culture of the Stoddard family. That noble and excellent memoir of her honored father is a work that will not perish, and will, I trust, influence many a young man toward a higher and better life."

A connection of the family and frequent visitor writes: —

"Mrs. Johnson's delightful home was not made a self-centering home in which to in-

dulge one's personal tastes, or habits of luxury and indolence. Each member of that household always had duties to perform, — something that was to help or benefit others. Among the writer's earliest personal recollections of this kind was a morning scene when admitted to the invalid's room. Mrs. Johnson lay on her couch, superintending her son (then a lad of seven or eight years) while he folded and directed a weekly paper which was regularly sent to some home missionary at the far West. How much easier it would have been for that mother to have done that little piece of the Lord's work herself! Her deft fingers would have accomplished in less than half the time the careful folding, the proper sealing, and, more than all, the laborious task of directing, this weekly offering. But this was taught and accepted in those childhood years to be a regular systematic doing for others. It was a cultivation of the true missionary spirit to enforce these small acts of self-denial, these short struggles with inclination to shirk

the unpleasant duty to more capable shoulders. The children's Christmas gifts, too, were generally home-made; the false stitches sometimes betraying the unskilled hand of the little artisan, but the task patiently followed to its completion by the mother's watchful eye. What an insight this gives of the influence in that home in things little esteemed by those outside, yet far-reaching and impressive in the results of future years!

"This attractive household opened its doors alike, and with the same kind of hospitality, to the rich and poor, the high and the lowly. This is a rare grace with one of Mrs. Johnson's social advantages. The latch-string was out to all who came within her kindly knowledge. The missionary, the clergyman whose scanty means would not permit a vacation far from his little parish, the struggling student, the country cousin third or fourth remove, the unfavored ones whose pleasures were few and primitive, needed to go no further than her beautiful home to find an

earthly paradise. At the table and at the fireside Mrs. Johnson presided with a genial and gracious presence which was perhaps her chief charm, and in ministering to her Lord's lowly disciple she did it unto Him."

An old business friend of her father writes: —

"Ever since I stood her on a box in her father's store for the purpose of fastening her bonnet strings, she has seemed to me to possess the innocence of childhood, and I could never look upon her as growing old."

Other friends write as follows: —

"The quick responsiveness to the interests of those about her, the power of making strangers feel at ease, the magnetic sympathy which won hearts, — all these traits belonged to her in an unusual degree. She lived much in the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, if I may so express it; her judgments were so kindly, — all censoriousness or anything like gossip was utterly distasteful to her."

"It is a great and rare privilege to have known such a woman. How much more to have lived day by day with her, as you did, and to have come under the beautiful, sympathetic, but yet unconscious influence of such a holy, pure, noble life! It may be said of her, as perhaps of no one else whom I ever knew, *she had no thought of self.* Yet her unselfishness was of such a gracious, beautiful type that there was no hint of sacrifice in it. She made the wants of others so completely her own as to allow no room for such a thought. I never met one, with her environment, so unselfish and thoughtful. I think her recognition and appreciation of the best, in every creature she came in contact with, was something altogether rare. It met its instant reward in the winning of friendship and love from rich and poor, ignorant and cultured."

"It seems almost impossible that a life so frail for many years could have exercised such an influence and done for so many,

but this was due to her force of character and soul. I hope that in my strength and activity I may be led to think often of this life and profit by its example."

"The radiance of that life which has now ascended to the house not made with hands gave brightness to many and wide circles here, who will walk far and long in sacred loyalty to that most rare and perfect light of both her precept and example."

"Looking back upon Mary's serene and beautiful life, it seems wonderful that she not only kept so fresh and sweet, but imparted a sense of that sweetness and freshness to all who came near her. It was the water of life — a 'well of water' always springing up and overflowing to bless every one — that was in her, and Christ was its source. There is this vitality only in those who are united to Christ. Mary lived 'bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things' through the love which bound her to her

Lord, and therefore to loving service for Him in the world. When I see the selfishness and personality of the world, and find so much of it within, I am compelled more and more to love and admire that life which went out so constantly for others, and thought little of self, except as she could be an instrument of blessing to all about her, and to all whom her prayers and sympathies could reach."

"Anything more heavenly sweet than dear Mary's face in her last sleep I never conceived of. I could only think of the lines:

> "'And on her hair a glory like a saint:
> She seemed a splendid angel newly drest
> Save wings, for heaven, —
> So pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.'

"I longed to stoop down and kiss her as I gave that last look, but she seemed too holy and angelic to profane by mortal touch. Every word Mr. Gordon said found an echo in our hearts, and the Bible verses, particularly those of the Proverbs, seemed written

for her. The music, so touchingly sweet, was what Mary would have loved to hear. I asked myself, 'Does she not hear it?' And then I thought, what are the most thrilling strains of earth to the chords of the celestial harps in whose harmony she now joins in praises to the Saviour she has long loved so well?"

"I wonder if it seemed to you as it did to me that afternoon at Mt. Auburn! I never witnessed so beautiful a burial. As we stood on that lovely spot, committing her precious body to the grave, — that other grave so near with its beautiful covering of flowers, — the distant hills shining in the mist, the changing sky and the sun casting its brightness aslant over us, it seemed to me the golden gates had been opened that we too might have a glimpse of the glory into which those so dear had just entered, and the better realize that they were not in these graves, but had risen and had passed through to receive the reward of their faith and patience."

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